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## CHFS Focus Employee Spotlight: Lawson puts good public relations into practice

Almost everybody in CHFS has heard of Gil Lawson, whether it's from receiving numerous press releases via email from him, reading his name in the newspaper, hearing him on the radio, seeing him on television or working with him on a media inquiry or publicity campaign.



Now, you'll get a chance to read about him in a little more detail because Lawson, CHFS spokesperson and branch manager, Division of Communications, is leaving on Feb. 16 to take a job with the Department of Education. However, he won't be forgotten anytime soon.

Lawson has been a vital cog in the CHFS communications wheel for the past seven years, first as an information office supervisor and now as a branch manager. "He spent his time well, trying to do good not only for the cabinet, but for all Kentuckians," says Janis Stewart, who has worked on Lawson's staff for the past five years. "Providing timely and accurate information...getting the word out in an effective and efficient way...is always paramount to Gil."

"I appreciate the opportunity to work with talented and dedicated people. They made the job fun and challenging," says Lawson. "I've learned a lot about the social and health issues facing Kentucky and have a greater respect for the people who are holding up the *safety net* for many of our citizens."

He has advised four cabinet secretaries, numerous executive staff members and program managers on public relations and media issues ranging from monkey pox to Medicaid. During his time here, the communications staff has received several awards for their work. Lawson has literally written hundreds of news releases and answered even more media inquiries during the past seven years.

"I have had the opportunity to work with very dedicated and caring people – from the Secretary's Office to the patient aide," says Lawson. "CHFS staff does a lot to help people who are often not seen – the nursing home resident, the person with mental retardation or an abused child. Our employees often don't get the appreciation and thanks they deserve."

In addition, he has worked on some very successful and high-profile publicity campaigns such as KCHIP, Healthy Babies Early Childhood Initiative, and Smoking Cessation.

When asked to single out one important accomplishment during his tenure at CHFS, Lawson replied, "Our cabinet has many programs and services that help people and I'm always glad when we are given a chance to promote them. I don't know that I could single out any accomplishment, but I'm proud of the work the cabinet did to get the KCHIP program off the ground and make sure children got health care services."

However, despite all of his achievements at CHFS, many folks always think of Lawson as a print reporter, which he was for 16 years prior to joining state government. He began his journalism career right here in Frankfort as a reporter with the State Journal. He went on to work for the Associated Press in Louisville and then settled at The Courier-Journal in 1987 where he wrote daily and long-range stories about health care, Medicaid, education, politics and state government.

Lawson was part of the reporting team at The Courier-Journal that covered the Carrollton bus crash and won a Pulitzer Prize for its stories. He wrote about ineffective drunk driving laws.

He also has received recognition for his writing from the Kentucky Press Association, the Education Writers Association, the American Bar Association, and the Kentucky Psychological Association and the Kentucky Association of Government Communicators. In 2001, he was awarded the Jennifer Schaaf Award from the Bluegrass Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists for excellence in government communications.

Some may also remember seeing Lawson as a panelist from 1990-97 on Comment on Kentucky, a public affairs program hosted by Al Smith on Kentucky Educational Television.

No matter from where you remember him, Lawson did good work for CHFS and he'll do the same for the Department of Education.

## CHFS Focus Program Spotlight: Survey asks fathers how state agency can better serve them

By Anya Armes Weber

Fathers across the state who are involved in child protection cases with the cabinet are having their say about how the agency meets their needs.



The cabinet's Department for Community Based Services, which conducts child protection and permanency casework

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— including child removals and adoptions, is in the first stage of a survey asking fathers to rate the cabinet's service to them and to suggest services that would assist them better.

"Fathers tell us that they often feel neglected and sometimes mistreated by the system," cabinet researcher Dr. Ruth Huebner said.

Cabinet leadership wants to change that.

"It's well worth the investment to survey fathers," said Dr. Eugene Foster, undersecretary for Children and Family Services. "Results will be used to enhance service delivery to fathers, which in turn will improve the safety and well-being of Kentucky's children," he said.

The first phase of the survey began last month. Approximately 3,700 fathers will be asked to complete and return the mailed surveys, which include questions about their experiences and satisfaction with the agency.

Although many states are seeking to engage fathers in the care of their children, the survey is the nation's first statewide effort to get feedback, Huebner said.

"We want to find out if fathers are regularly invited to case conferences and family team meetings, if they feel their opinions are valued and if the services provided strengthen their skills and family safety," she said. "We need to know if there are barriers to fathers accessing and interacting with the agency."

Huebner said disruptions of the father-child relationship are detrimental for all children but especially for boys. Positive interactions between children and their fathers benefit them both by creating bonds that protect against adult criminality and child abuse.

"The father-child relationship is critically important in building skills and psychological competence for children," Huebner said. Despite these important relationships, the father-child bond has too often taken a backseat to focus on mothers, she said.

Stacy White, a supervisor in the cabinet's Campbell County protection and permanency office and a social work student at the University of Kentucky, is coordinating the survey as part of her master's degree practicum.

White said fathers who haven't returned the survey will get reminder letters in the coming weeks.

The surveys are anonymous, White said, and their postage paid return envelopes will be mailed to a Frankfort post office box.

White said the cabinet is appreciative of the participating fathers.

"They're really helping us — and their children -- by letting us know where we need to improve services," she said.

Cabinet staff will be asked to take a web-based survey with questions about how they engage fathers in case planning, what barriers they face in helping fathers and if they have ample local resources for referrals, White said.

The department has already made changes to better include fathers as part of the Program Improvement Plan for the state. Staff involved with child protection cases statewide are finding fathers and inviting them to family team meetings, identifying paternal relatives for placement and providing referrals and services to improve parenting skills. Procedural changes emphasize expectations to include fathers as active partners in the care of children and with the agency.

## **DPH observes American Heart Month in February, Governor Fletcher proclaims Feb. 15 Go Red for Women Day in Kentucky**

Governor Ernie Fletcher has proclaimed the month of February as American Heart Month and Feb. 15th as Go Red for Women Day in Kentucky to help raise awareness that heart disease is the number one killer and the leading cause of disability in women.



"We want people around the Commonwealth to wear red this month to symbolize their commitment to take charge of their heart health and live longer, stronger lives," said Dr. William Hacker, Commissioner of the Department for Public Health (DPH). "We want women to be aware of the lifestyle changes that can keep them healthy for life."

Go Red for Women Day is an opportunity to highlight the ways in which heart disease affects women. Since 1984, cardiovascular disease has taken the lives of more women than men every year in the United States. Cardiovascular disease, including stroke, claims more women's lives than the next seven causes of death combined - nearly 500,000 a year. One in 2.5 women will die of heart disease or stroke in the U.S. Additionally, about 40,000 more women than men have a stroke each year, our nation's third

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leading cause of death and number one cause of permanent, long-term disability.

Sarah Wilding, Chief Nurse at the Kentucky Department for Public Health, said, "Most women do not realize that cardiovascular disease is the greatest threat to their health. One of the enduring half-truths about cardiovascular disease is that heart disease is a man's disease. Cardiovascular diseases are devastating to women, too."

In 2001, 15,000 Kentuckians died as a result of cardiovascular disease; 8,000 were women. In 2002, the trend continued to show women in Kentucky dying at a higher rate than men due to cardiovascular disease with more than 11,500 total deaths. Nearly 6,000 were women.

The Department for Public Health has joined the American Heart Association's initiative to draw attention to the vital issue of women's heart health through the Go Red for Women campaign. Citizens can go red for women and heart disease by:

- Reducing your risk of cardiovascular disease by quitting smoking, getting physically active and eating healthy foods;
- Knowing and tracking your blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar numbers;
- Scheduling a checkup with your healthcare professional each year on your birthday; and
- Following your healthcare professional's recommendations, including taking prescribed medications.

DPH encourages everyone to know the warning signs of heart disease and stroke and the importance of calling 9-1-1 immediately if symptoms are present. Women may present with less typical heart attack symptoms such as arm or shoulder pain; jaw, neck or throat pain; or pain in the back, beneath the breastbone or in the pit of the stomach.

The most common signs of a heart attack are: chest discomfort in the center of the chest that feels like pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain; discomfort in other areas of the upper body; pain in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach; shortness of breath prior to or along with chest discomfort; and other signs such as breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

Signs of a stroke are: sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes; sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination; sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding; sudden numbness or weakness of the face,

arm or leg, especially on one side of the body; and sudden, severe headache with no known cause.

"Recognition of these warning signs and calling 911 for treatment are crucial steps in minimizing damage to your heart and brain," said Hacker.

According to a 2004 report on the status of cardiovascular disease in the Commonwealth, "Close to the Heart of Kentucky," only about one third of Kentucky adults can identify all of the signs of a heart attack and would respond by calling 911 and only four out of ten know all of the stroke signs and would respond appropriately.

For more information about cardiovascular disease, call DPH's Heart Disease and Stroke Program at (502) 564-7996 or visit <http://chfs.ky.gov/dph/cvd.htm>.

## CHFS Focus Health Tip of the Week: February 14 is Congenital Heart Defect Awareness Day

By Anne Parr, R.N.

Congenital Heart Disease is considered to be the most common birth defect, and is a leading cause of birth-defect related deaths worldwide, according to the Congenital Heart Information Network.



- Below are some basic facts prepared by the Congenital Heart Information Network about this cardiovascular condition.
- Sometimes during early pregnancy, a baby's heart fails to form properly, resulting in structural abnormalities known as congenital heart defects (CHD). Although some defects are genetic, in many cases the cause is unknown.
- It is estimated that 40,000 babies with CHD are born in the United States each year. Approximately 1 million American children and adults with congenital heart defects and childhood onset heart disease are alive today.
- CHD is the most frequently occurring birth defect, and is the leading cause of birth defect related deaths.
- Although some babies will be diagnosed at birth, sometimes the diagnosis is not made until days, weeks, months, or even years after. In some cases, CHD's are not detected until adolescence or adulthood.
- Some CHD's may not require treatment other than periodic visits to a pediatric cardiologist. Others can be treated with medications or repaired with surgery and/or procedures. Complex defects may require several surgeries and are never really "cured".
- Many cases of sudden cardiac death in young athletes are caused by undiagnosed CHD's and childhood onset heart disease.

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- During the year 1998 in the United States, 55,000 hospital admissions for treatment of CHD were recorded, a statistic which includes an estimated 20,000 operations performed for repair or palliation per year.

To learn more about congenital heart defects, visit the Congenital Heart Information Network's website at [www.tchin.org/aware](http://www.tchin.org/aware).

## **Group organizing employee recognition efforts invites input, members**

*By Anya Armes Weber*

By putting an emphasis on quality service, the cabinet has a lot to celebrate ---- from the accomplishment of offices throughout the state to the contributions of individual staff at every level.

An employee workgroup is forming to facilitate a cabinetwide employee recognition plan, and staff cabinetwide are encouraged to give their input and even join the group.

Here are some of the group's questions. Your answers will help them decide what efforts would be most valuable.

- What formal recognition activities (awards) does your office practice regularly, and when? Who is the contact person for these activities?
- What other employee recognition/appreciation plans has your office implemented recently or in the past?
- Have these efforts been well received?
- What recommendations do you have for a statewide recognition program?

Your ideas are needed and encouraged. Please e-mail Bobbie Walters at [bobbie.walters@ky.gov](mailto:bobbie.walters@ky.gov) with your answers and suggestions.

Employees interested in joining the planning team should get their supervisor's approval to participate and complete a one-page employee recognition committee application available for download at <http://chfs.ky.gov/olpa/dc/focus>. You may also contact Walters for further information about joining the group.

## **Governor's Diversity Day is next Wednesday**

The Farnham Dudgeon Civic Center in Frankfort will host more than 1,000 middle school and high school students from across the state at the Governor's Diversity Day on Wednesday, Feb. 16. The students will hear speakers and

participate in exhibits from colleges and universities, government agencies and private organizations.

Booth exhibits will be open to students from 1 - 2:45 p.m. Executive staff and other CHFS employees will be at the cabinet's booth to talk to students about career opportunities, cabinet programs and services and the cabinet's commitment to health and diversity.

## **For Health Weekend, park will rub people the right way**

General Butler State Resort Park in Carrollton invites couples to pamper themselves with a weekend devoted to massage, meditation, yoga and other healthy ways of relieving stress and feeling better.



The Healthier Pampering Weekend Package, scheduled for March 4-6, is priced at \$260 per couple and includes workshops entitled "Alternative Foods and Recipes for Better Health," "Herbal Alternatives for Common Ailments," "Skin Care with Herbal Products," "Self-Help Reflexology," and "Couples Massage." A type of body therapy called ortho-bionomy will be covered in one session, while another will instruct participants on healing body movements known as Chi-Gong. Special entertainment is scheduled Saturday evening.

Also included are dinner buffets on Friday and Saturday, lunch buffet on Saturday, breakfast on Saturday and Sunday, and two nights' accommodation at the lodge.

For more information, including accommodation availability, contact the park toll-free at 1-866-462-8853.

## **HR Complex Scheduled for HVAC Outage on Feb. 26**

Mechanical Services will require an outage of the Heating, Ventilation and Cooling system (HVAC) at the HR Complex beginning at 8 a.m. on Sat. Feb. 26. The outage will last 10 hours and is necessary for the Energy Savings Contractor to make piping connections to the system.

During this period the office temperatures may be lower than normal. Computer server areas will not be affected. There will be no outage if outside temperatures are below freezing.

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## Kentucky Safety Program and the Personnel Cabinet will sponsor blood drive on Feb. 18

The Kentucky Safety Program and the Personnel Cabinet will sponsor a blood drive on Fri., Feb. 18 from 8 a.m. – 2 p.m.

The Central Kentucky Blood Center will be accepting donations in mobile units at 200 Fair Oaks Lane. Appointments are necessary and may be scheduled by calling 564-6846.



## Department of Corrections hosting blood drive Feb. 25

Department of Corrections (DOC) will host a blood drive in the Health Services Building parking lot on Fri., Feb. 25. The drive will be from 8 a.m. until 1 p.m. Contact Gina Rose at 564-6490 to make an appointment.

## The Big Move: So Far, So Good

“The *Big Move* is right on schedule and going well,” according to Lisa Detherage, director, Division for Facilities Management. “This is due largely to employees cooperating and preparing in advance for their move.”

The final outcome of all these changes and hard work will be that department members are closer to each other and allow for more collaborative working relationships. It is more efficient, not to mention easier, to walk two or three cubicles to talk to a colleague face-to-face, rather than travel two or three floors or communicate by phone.



Detherage reminds staff that when your move is scheduled, please be ready first thing on the morning of the scheduled move. Have your boxes packed. Being prepared and ready to make the transition lessens the stress and costs associated with the move and speeds the entire process.

Move coordinators should walk the area the night before the move is slated to begin, to ensure that at least the first seven to eight employees scheduled to move the next day are packed and ready for the movers.

Also, keep in mind that in addition to offices being moved, conference rooms are being repositioned as well. So, if you have scheduled a meeting in a conference room, it's a

good idea to check with the move coordinator for your area a couple of days in advance to make sure the conference room is still available. This will lessen confusion and ensure that if that particular conference room is not going to be available there is ample time to change the meeting location.

Remember, the detailed move plans are currently posted in each lobby. If you have questions, please contact your move coordinator.

## Employee Enrichment

By Anya Armes Weber



*Employee Enrichment is a weekly feature for CHFS staff. These tips for making work better will focus on team building, customer service and personal development.*

As Heart Month continues, let's remember one thing we can control when we are stressed – our breathing. When we are fatigued, our breathing becomes shallow, depriving our bodies of the oxygen needed to promote alertness. Gail Hahn, a self-proclaimed “fun-cilitator” and motivational speaker, suggests taking several deep, diaphragm breaths to expand your abdomen and rib cage every few minutes during times of greatest fatigue to help your energy return.

Become aware of your breathing when you are under stress and take some deep cleansing breaths to calm your nerves and give you time to think more clearly, Hahn says. Deep breathing also keeps us from speaking in anger or jumping to conclusions and saying the wrong thing at the wrong time.

Practice good breathing: Expand your belly when you inhale and push in on your belly when you exhale as opposed to breathing through your chest.